"Multiculturalism: An Interpellation of Gender Roles in Women's Studies in English Literature"

A Synopsis

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INTRODUCTION

Massive transmogrifications occurred worldwide in the nineteenth century, on both the ideological and the technological levels. Social theories have become increasingly focused on the changing forms of social and cultural identity in contemporary societies. It is perhaps not surprising that the subject of identity has been central to race and ethnic studies. Identity gives an individual a sense of personal location and provides a stable core of one's individuality. And it is also about one's social relationship and complex involvement with there. In the modern world, these issues have become even more complex involvement with others. In the modern world, these issues have become even more complex and confusing. In this context, it is interesting to note that much of the literature in the field of race and ethnic studies have emphasized that identity is not imposed but is also chosen and actively used, albeit within particular social contexts and constraints.

The issue of minority rights and multiculturalism is high on the political agenda of most states today since most of them comprise varieties of minorities multiculturalism which promises a deeper understanding of the demands of marginalized communities, thereby ensuring equality and justice for them. It does so by demanding special consideration for these groups, advocating politics of difference in contrast to the liberal politics of indifference. Feminists too have had a close affinity to politics of difference and therefore, at one level, empathize with multiculturalists. They have accordingly made claims for another marginalized community which is women. However, multiculturalist stress on granting cultural rights also opens up the possibility for a conservative interpretation of prescriptive identities and centenarian politics. This is extremely problematic to feminists, as while multiculturalism pays special consideration to inequalities between groups, they fail to address inequalities within the

groups. In fact, feminist granting of cultural rights would lead to the continued subordination of women within the group. Thus, they fear that limited gains made by the feminist movement over the years may be weakened by increased multicultural sensibilities. After struggling for so long to increase gender equality and to decrease violence against women, feminists ought to be concerned their newly gained ground, might be lost by way of what starts as concessions to difference.

The focus of this study is to look into the problems created by the interface between multiculturalism and feminism. It intends to study whether, is reconciliation possible between multiculturalism and feminism, despite the tension between the two. To understand this in my thesis, various literature books titled *Cry, The peacock* by Anita Desai, *Family* by J.California Cooper, *A house without windows* by Nadia Hashini, The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood, *The Bell Jar by* Sylvia Plath, Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins*. The interviews of prominent minority community people, intellectuals, women activists, and community people have been taken. This is because much literature is not available on the issue.

The thesis focuses on the issues of the gender stereotypes between multicultural and feminism. It deals with the notion of difference within multiculturalist and feminist thought, the question which is at the fore font of political theorists. In contrast to liberal politics of indifference, politics of difference endorses diversity in culture, experiences, lifestyle and gender. The kind of oppression suffered by both women and minorities such as violence, stereotyping, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism.

The key area concerned with granting group rights to cultural groups, the feminist position diverges from the multiculturalist position. The solution varies from granting no group

right and granting individual rights, to inter-group equality working in tandem with intra-group equality. What feminist point is that culture should not trump all other considerations.

The advent of English education with facilities for higher education for women has gained an impact on the status of women in society and the Indian woman who for ages had to be content with playing only a subordinate role in the social life of the country now had opportunities for playing many new roles. While many of them were called upon to play their roles as teachers, doctors, and public servants, even as housewives, educated women began to enjoy greater individuality, recognition and respectability than had been granted them in the past. Enlightened families like the Dutt family educated their girls at home and at school and even sent them to universities. But the lot of the average Indian woman still remained much the same, for convention and superstition died hard and few were the parents who could be courageous enough to fracture the old barriers and break these restraints. Indian writers in English are now worldwide recognized for their energetic contribution to the English literature. Besides the legends, some of whom mentioned above, there are women writers such as Anita Desai, Kamala Markandeya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Saghal, Geeta Mehta, Dina Mehta, Raji Narasimhan, Shashi Despande, Gita Hariharan, Shobha De, Namita Gokhale, Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Manju Kapur to name a few who contribute to storm the world of English literature through their authentic writings.

A historical investigation reveals that the patriarchal system came to India with the Aryans and it was Brahmanical practice. The Dravidians were Nayyars in South India and their family system was matriarchal. Studies on Dravidian ethnic survivals reveal that the matriarchal character of the old Dravidian family was considerably compromised under the power of patriarchal culture. This can be noticed in several Sangam texts. However, cross culture effects can be noticed in both groups. Even today when the matriarchal system is almost vanished among the Malabar Nayars, the family continues to have maternal ancestors.

Marriage however is a holy matrimony which is a union of two souls not only for one life but also for seven lives. It is sardonic and paradoxical that what was once a pious union of two souls has been turned into a convenient tool for the harassment of women. Marriage has a different meaning in western civilization though it has fascinated western scholar too. The multi-faceted experience of Indian women is obviously expressed in short stories and novels. Our Indian women novelists have the convention of writing on Indian women, and their predicament within the family and outside. Society, as the innermost subject of their fictional writing, Indian womanhood, and the distinctive features of India is reflected in their work. It has now received worldwide acknowledgment. Many events in every woman's life are represented in stories and novels. The storytelling is the natural inborn quality of women because they can comprehend the cause of every incident that happens in women's life. Women novelists in the field of fiction have made considerable contributions. The most vital phenomenon today is the female quest for identity. However, the Socio-cultural and Psychological disparities caused by their own convention may result in insignificant variations within the nature of struggle from place to place. Over the centuries significant assumptions, historical circumstances, and ideologies greatly stand against women's literary productions. The patriarchal power has been exercised over women continuously to emphasize their power. The women's writings not only express sorrowfulness and exploitation but also their social and moral achievements.

This study examines the ways in which place, nationality, culture, and other differences impact women's lives. The study also analyses the ways in which power and social control enter women's everyday lives and impact their sense of identity and well-being. The study also traces how ethnicity, race, and economic status play a significant role in shaping the identity of women and analyses the effect of the relation between ethnicities, nationalism, and the state where their condition is re-examined and redefined within a transcultural framework. The main

focus of the discussion is on how the dual laws and culture of the land influence women in framing their identity. While placing their choice, the characters are guided by their root commitments where an independent identity assertion remains hardly possible.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Wankhade Pundlik Jambuwantrao. The Present Study on Socio-Cultural Variations:

The cultural diversity of the great Indian people gets reflected in their languages, religions, food habits, family structures, marriage systems, arts, festivals, names, style of clothing, and geographical conditions. All these aspects are parts of the great Indian cultural heritage for the last 5000 years and their importance in human life cannot be expressed fully in words alive. Indian writing in English is a picture of the social issues from pre-independence times to the present times. Pre-independence Indian English literature was the beginning of Indian writing. This phase is considered the birth and growth of Indian writing in English. It is a period of evolution of Indian writing. In this period western literature has effectively been imitated in substance style by the Indian writers writing in English.

Sridharan P: Feminism:

It brings self-determination to females from the accountabilities given to them or enforced on them even by women sometimes with or without their own knowledge. The novels of Anita Nair project separate identities of women in the patriarchal setup. An Indian woman has carried the burden of family, and slaved for her husband and children, without minding whether the family is comprehensive or nuclear in her novels. Even though, in this twenty-first century, it seems that females are given autonomy to acquire more space in all the fields like astronauts, politics, and so on, they are not considered as human beings and their feelings and emotions are not appreciated appropriately.

Gardia, Alok: A Study of Gender Sensitization among University Students in Relation to their Study Discipline Values and Family Background

It is the beginning of gender awareness, which is more analytical and critical questions about gender disparities. Research in each field of women's studies and more so in the field of gender sensitization is in demand of the day and also there is a need to evolve specific policies, research, and strategies regarding this. That's why the present research study seeks to study the role of family, values and educational institutions in promoting gender-sensitive values. The review of the related literature shows that significant works have been done on women's education and gender issues related problems and background variables mostly on the foreign samples but very little research was conducted on gender sensitivity in relation to their study discipline, values and family background in the Indian context. Further, there is not even a single study that compares these variables between different disciplines with reference to the gender-sensitivity. Therefore, it is justified and relevant to conduct research on gender sensitivity among university students in relation to their values, study discipline, and family background.

Chaturvedi, R. Vandana. Eco-feminism:

At the heart of Eco-feminist analysis are four central claims, the oppression of women and the oppression of nature are interconnected. These connections must be uncovered in order to understand both the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. The feminist analysis must include ecological insights. feminist perspective must be a part of any proposed ecological solutions. Applying feminist historical methodology, some academic Eco-feminists re-evaluate the patriarchal myth of progress, particularly its detrimental effects on the human nature relationship. Another area of focus concerned the relationship of scientific worldviews to religion and culture. Eco-feminism suggests that the antagonism sometimes existing between

religious and scientific worldviews has been detrimental, used by both approaches to advance their own hierarchical structures. The reductionist models of both Western theologies and many Western scientific 195 ideologies project a material world that is not sacred, but mechanistic. This apparent disconnect between the material and the sacred, alleged by Eco-feminists to be fostered by both religion and science, has been particularly detrimental when acted upon by European-American dominant cultures. European life through the Middle Ages, the "fathers" of the scientific revolution determined to dominate nature.

Feminism a philosophical study: Jyochy: Jampala

Feminists also consider major problems within mainstream western social and political thought to lie in the inclination to universalize experiences associated only with men. This means that they try to represent experiences associated specifically with men as describing that which is common to all human beings. In contrast to this pragmatic approach, radical feminism aimed to reshape society and restructure its institutions, which were seen as inherently patriarchal. Providing the core theory for modern feminism, radicals argued that women's subservient role in society was too closely woven into the social fabric to be unrevealed without a revolutionary revamping of society itself. They strove to supplement hierarchical and traditional power relationships they saw as reflecting a male bias. Finally, cultural or "difference" feminism, the last of the three currents, rejected the notion that men and women are intrinsically the same and celebrated women's differences. Inherent in its message was a critique of mainstream feminism's attempt to enter traditionally male spheres. The movement operated to demonstrate to women that they need not be satisfied with their traditional management of housekeeping functions, but they can participate equally with men in every sphere of life.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this research work lies in the thematic study of the seven works of *Cry, The peacock* by Anita desai, *The gravedigger's daughter* by Joyce Carol Oates, *Family* by J.California Cooper, *A house without windows* by Nadia Hashini, *Finding home* by Susan warner, *The women could fly* by Mega Giddings, Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *Voice of an angel* by Kelsey Macbride. The present study is a representation of the sociocultural variations of the contemporary social structure in connecting with the representing women to come out of the bound created out of the patriarchal constraints and to put out the idea that each individual is a free solo and to fly high to catch the freeness in the individual life.

The present research work satisfies the long-felt need to focus on the contemporary social structure in the particular society constructed by a woman. It is the candid presentation of the caste, class, gender, religion, social status, customs, and cultural variations of the society bound upon on women. This presentation is the imminent need of the present hour to break the chain. This also highlights the basement of the social structure in contemporary India as well as in the global society as a whole.

OBJECTIVES

- The analyse the social structure and the cultural changes that affect women in a contemporary global society.
- To find stereotypical attitudes and practices are the reasons for the deprivation of women in society.
- To attempt an extensive critical study on women can be liberated and have equal access to opportunities.
- Analyse the subordinate position of women in connection with the women's movement
- To understand the trans-cultural existential dilemma caused due to the cross-cultural encounters in the diverse cultural taming.
- To analyse the identity crises faced by women under social and emotional conflicts

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the text of various selected writers and also included a critical analysis of the selected writer's works. It also included the secondary material available in the various libraries. In the process of data collection primary sources of the selected writers and secondary sources rather than text as critical writing on the selected works, critical, research papers, reviews, and other supporting sources from various places. Book reviews, critical analysis, editorial columns in newspapers and other literature, articles, and thesis related to the works are considered as the raw material or data for the research work. The scope of the analysis would include scrutiny of the socio-cultural aspects represented by the respective novelist to show the contemporary social condition of human life. In the process of data analysis would choose the particular related material and use it as a supporting device to the views of the researcher.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

- The cultural variation in the contemporary time is genuinely presented in the literature of truth, reality and actual conditions as reflected in the seven selected novels – *Cry, The peacock* by Anita desai, *A House without, Family* by J.California Cooper, *A house without windows* by Nadia Hashini, The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood, *The Bell Jar by* Sylvia Plath, Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The yellow Wallpaper .by Charlotte perkins.*
- The stories of the protagonists of the seven selected novels have developed through the basic foundation of socio-cultural situations women goes through and built the creative structure of the thematic network and embellished with the stylistic language.
- The study explores the possibility of researching hybridity and in-between in relation to women's life in multi-dimensional perspectives.
- The literary works presented are based on the picture gallery of contemporary society as the portrayal of characters and factual and fanciful presentation of contemporary society.
- The study analyses the effect of culture, religion, and domestic backgrounds in establishing the identity formations of women. It sets out to examine the transcultural woman communities, to illustrate how an atmosphere of solidarity is narratively structured within the frame of difference and the intersection of gender identity offers them a separate space for identity formation.
- The study analyses how, on one hand, the characters fall victim to the diverse laws and gender roles assigned by society and, on other hand, how they subvert these roles in order to reassign their life.

CHAPTER WISE SYNOPTIC SCHEME

In the first chapter, the introduction to the life and the works of the selected writers is given. It is to find out the roots of the writer's family background, class, culture, and the contemporary social structure around the particular individual. The story *Cry the peacock,* it is the story of a young girl named Maya, who was surrounded by a childhood prophecy of disaster. The cries of the peacock in the novel represent her cries for love. Maya is an extremely sensitive married girl and she had gone through a terrible experience due to the patriarchal behavior of her husband. *A house without windows* is the second work based on the struggles faced by the women helping a child. It is structured based on the Indian cultural background of Afghanistan. *A thousand splendid suns* based on Rasheed's cruelty toward the women in his family are tolerated under the new Shari's law, enforced by the new Taliban regime. Rasheed is now sure that Tariq is Aziza's real father, and Rasheed uses this secret to keep Laila in line. Mariam and Laila attempt to take the children and leave Rasheed, but the women and children are caught. Under the Taliban, it is illegal for women to run away from their husbands. Rasheed beats Laila and Mariam for trying to leave, and he threatens them with worse if they try again. *The Bell jar,* reflects the young women coming of the age, but it does not follow the usual trajectory of adolescent development into adulthood. Instead of undergoing a progressive education in the ways of the world. Their writing is the presentation of the social structure and socio-cultural variation of contemporary society. *The handmaid's tale* includes power, sexuality, the place of an individual in society, feminism, power of language, moral relativism, and gender conflict. *The yellow wallpaper,* the story reveals that this gender division adds the effect of keeping women in a childish state of ignorance and preventing their full development. *Family* is a story filled with tragedies; it is also about survival. In its strong rhythm and colloquial expression. It is a persistent affirmation of the power of the human spirit to do battle with evil and to win, even if only for a while to compel the voice and the shades of socio-

cultural variations. These aspects have been discussed as reflected in the seven selected novels. The summary of the conclusions presents the chapter as vice synoptic summary. Then the accomplishment of the objectives and the validation of the hypotheses are presented. The findings and the conclusions of the study are brought out. There are recommendations and suggestions made to suggest remedial courses of action to improve the global scenario in the multicultural set-up. The practical, academic, and pedagogical implications of the present study are discussed. The Scope for further research is enumerated.

The characters are victims of a dis-positioned state, where they are subjected to a world of strangeness. Being part of socially structured norms, the characters are not free from the socially imposed rules legitimized by religion, nation, and culture. The study examines whether restrictions placed on them are the result of national or religious laws and how women address those restrictions. It looks at the position of women in the areas of family, religion, and nation. With particular reference to the dis-positioning, dislocation, and cultural clashes the characters encounter, the thesis explores how religious, social, and biological rules endorsed upon women are used in controlling their might. While women in *Maps for lost lovers* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are direct victims of legitimized power exertion, the Canadian nurse Hana in The English Patient deconstructs the established notion of power and force. The power 17 of destructive and deadly weapons couldn't generate fear in her mind and she is unmoved by the fact of imminent danger. With a special focus on three different works, this study centres to highlight the way cultural, religious, and emotional conflicts are tackled by women thus placing them in a line of solidarity.

Analysing conceptual conflict and cooperation. Before delving deep into the topic, it would be appropriate to understand the basics of Feminism and Social Justice. Feminism can be seen as a belief in social, economic and political equality of sexes. It holds that women have suffered and are still suffering injustice because of their sex. It is a range of social movements,

political movements, and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish and achieve the political, economic personal, and social equality of sexes. Feminism incorporates the position that societies prioritize the male point of view and that women are treated on an unequal footing. Efforts to change include fighting gender stereotypes and seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. Feminist movements have campaigned and are continued to do so for women's rights including the right to vote, hold public office, work, earn fair wages, equal pay, own property, etc. The history of the modern western feminist movement is divided into three waves. The first wave comprised the women's suffrage movement spanning through 19th and early 20th centuries, promoting women's rights to vote. The second Abstract wave began in the 1960s and campaigned for legal and social equality for women. The third wave is characterized by a focus on individuality and diversity. Feminism has equally been interpreted by different schools of thought. Social justice is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured in terms of the distribution of wealth, Opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges. The concept of social justice is referred to the process of ensuring that individuals fulfill their societal roles and receive what was their due from society. It assigns rights and duties in society, enabling people to receive the basic benefits and burdens of cooperation. There have been certain concepts that run counter to the basic tenets of social justice. These have inhibited the realization of social justice in the truest sense. Abysmal indifference to these entities has led to half of the human race suffering. These seem to be conflicting when put against social justice theories. One of these concepts is the system of patriarchy. It is an ideology and a hierarchy based on the assertion of the superiority of elite men to other men and of all men to women. It has historically dominated the world, its resources, and ideas and continues to do so as it gives control and advantages to men over women. Historically it has taken different forms. Today it can be said that patriarchy dominates social organizations and

exerts control over all human institutions including the political and Abstract economic, which in turn perpetuate and reinforce patriarchy. As the oldest form of supremacy, it has formed the notion of inequality and hierarchy among people and made all they took naturally. It has been conceived as the root cause of women's subordination. Similarly, the debate about public/private distinction holds the center stage in feminist philosophy. Within gender studies, the interest in the public/private dichotomy emerged due to its gendered nature-association of masculinity with the public on one hand and the association of feminity with the private on the other hand. Feminists have engaged with this debate in varied ways with some taking an anthropological account and others historical account of the origin of public/private dichotomy. It has been challenged by feminists. They have argued that women, like any other individuals, are free and equal beings thus their emancipation and empowerment can be achieved while releasing them from the hierarchical relations between the public and private spheres. The demand for equal rights for women and men within the family and the political domain has been an essential feature of the feminist struggle. Care ethics has reinforced the idea of traditional roles of women as homemakers, caretakers, and self-righteous. In an ethic of care, a woman is expected to be the one- caring in all situations, thus forcing her to remain in the position of sole are giver. By reinforcing these gender roles, a woman is caught in the role of a subservient person, caring for others but not for herself. Thus, this care ethics has been seen as Abstract feminization of care work by feminists. These concepts, which are conflicting in nature when put against social justice have put women recklessly, indiscriminately, punitively, and purposefully in subordination. A host of theories involving social justice have been designed but none of them seems to have been concerned with the exclusion of women from society. Even the theory constructed by Rawls, which is believed to be transcendental in nature, seems to have ignored the concerns of women in society.

Direct experiences, critical observation, and focused analysis have established the fact that since time immemorial, women have been forced to occupy a secondary place in society. Such a secondary status is imposed upon women by several forces like culture, environment, education, society, and tradition which were generated and controlled by men. Our civilization has been patriarchal in nature given the fact that all the sciences, religions, laws, and patterns of thinking are the creations of men. Summing speaking all these have instilled a sense of inferiority in women. Though humanity is spoken of in every field, in reality, it has taken a back seat. Simone de Beauvoir says *"They are women in virtue of their anatomy and physiology"*. Throughout history, they have always been subordinated to men. They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing they have only received. In ancient times women might have worshiped men as heroes but today they want to find out a hero within themselves by raising the slogan of women's emancipation. Women are fighting to liberate themselves from the clutches of male oppression. Throughout history and in all civilizations, there existed feminists protesting against Legal, economic and social restrictions on the basic rights of women. According to Hodgson, when we look back into the history of women's struggle against oppression, we are able to identify instances of resistance that we can legitimately identify as feminist in nature, without judging those instances unfavorably against the organized feminism of the twentieth century. Contrary to the definitions given in the dictionaries which advocate women's rights penning the belief based on equality of sexes, refers to an intense awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems.

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